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REVISIONISM AS A FACTOR OF REGIONAL DESTABILIZATION

HISTORIOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF REVISIONISM

History is bunk.
— ALDOUS HUXLEY,
“Brave New World”

In the cult dystopic novel *Brave New World*, the same as in Orwell's *1984* and many other literary writings of similar genre, historical contexts are subject to arbitrary modifications, which actually testifies of a true awareness about the significance of the past as the source of legitimation, but also as rational explanation of the present. It is advisable that, in the modern era, such an explanation, even if wrong, is or sounds rational; this is why the past has to be modified, that's why things insubstantial have to be emphasized as substantive, and the sum and substance marginalized. Least advisable is to openly make things up since interventions as such are easily disclosed as deceptions.

Revisionism can be discussed in a variety of ways. Although the path of revisionism is so obviously a wrong one, many historians and critics of inadvisability of revisionism are often

invoking desirability of changes in science and, generally, notions about the past, wandering all the time why, after all, should a revisionist intervention be disclaimed. This is meant to imply that critics of revisionism are nothing but sclerotic dogmatists who stand against any progress in getting a deeper insight into the past.

Naturally, the very accusation is senseless: not a single historian dedicated to professional approach to his or her subject the matter would ever stand against progress in scientific methods, disclosure of new sources or plurality of interpretations. The heart of the matter when it comes to revisionism is the stance that it implies neglect of scientific methods, manipulation of sources and completely arbitrary (re)interpretation of the past that derives from some ideological bias. In this sense, revisionism is a *technical term* denoting a bad practice in presentation and interpretation of the past. Explorative, methodological, theoretical and other approaches to reconsideration of the knowledge about the past – that do not imply unscientific and untheoretical

impositions are differently qualified: critical reconsideration, new research or new paradigms. The latter are leading towards a change (occasionally radical) in our understanding of the past, but are not revisionism as this technical term is denoted in historiography. In this sense, it is totally unnecessary to classify revisionism as legitimate and illegitimate, justified or unjustified, etc. Classifications as such are generating debates on the notion itself – which, at the very least, turns into an empty scholastic debate.

Revisionism needs not be just academic. Public revisionism, either in the form of radical renouncement or rehabilitation of figures or episodes from the past (renamed streets, schools, public institutions, relocated tombstones, film or theater productions, etc.) is also very much plasticized and, by the very nature of things, resounds stronger than academic revisionism. Judicial rehabilitations, retrials of cases from the past or reconsiderations of past events by commissions, established and supported by ruling structures, which are using their findings to redefine the culture of memory and, hence, the identity of a society are giving revisionism an exceptional, *official* dimension.

As it seems, the most benign, but at the same time very paradigmatic manifestations of revisionism are of lexical type – i.e. when it comes to naming the subject matter of a research or some figures. So, Karađorđe will always be called Karađorđe, Stalin – Stalin, but Tito has to be called Broz now. First World War is now called the Great War, events that have taken place before the Christian era are referred to as events taking place before Christ. Such linguistic changes stand for ideological statements and usually lack academic background no matter how often they are presented as academic.

Anyway, revisionism seen as unscientific and non-theoretical impositions that have penetrated scholarly study of the past is a phenomenon that itself calls to be researched, both from the standpoint of methodology and history of historiography.

Naturally, revisionist contents were meant to legitimize warring policies of the 1990s and still stand for a factor of regional destabilization. Revisionist narratives have been interwoven into national identities in the region and turned into a major factor of shaping these identities. In this sense, every country in the region has its own, quite specific experiences. Nevertheless, it is evident that “others” are being excluded from affirmative contents of the culture of memory. This is best illustrated by the term *anti-fascism*; the term has been nationalized to such extent that it now completely precludes its crucial ideogeme – *brotherhood and unity*. And in the case of Serbia, explicit exclusions of any contribution whatsoever members of other nations on the territory of Yugoslavia have given to the antifascist victory are quite often. (So, it happens that some formulations go to extremes by introducing the status of “antifascist nation” that is being recognized just to Russians, Poles and Serbs.) In each and every newly emerged state different forms of revisionism help to create conflicting identity-building contents, hostile to domestic and foreign “other” alike. As constitutive parts of national identity, official and, especially, extremist forms of the “culture of memory” are inasmuch threatening to regional peace and stability as identity narratives are ideologically fit for legitimization of any conflict.

Srdan Milošević

PUBLIC SPHERE – A FORUM OR A BOXING RING?

EUROPE: DISPUTABLE RESOLUTIONS

Ever since the fall of the Berlin Wall revision of history and consequent political revisionism have been usually referred to in the context of post-socialist societies of Eastern Europe. In the process of their transformation into neoliberal societies pictures about the past have been changed, often to the extent that they entailed totally inversed interpretations of historical events, figures and processes, and became constitutive parts of new ideological concepts and footholds to numerous right-wing and conservative movements, and political narratives. In transitional countries, revision, as a notion, has lost its affirmative connotation (of something logically necessary for advancement of the knowledge about the past) and in colloquial and political speech became synonymous to revisionism. Publication of “new” facts and new, value-based interpretations of the past generated dangerous historical forgeries meant to back up unprincipled compromises and legitimize dubious political figures and movements.

Over time, and especially after global changes developments of September 11, 2001 had provoked, the above-mentioned terms were interpreted against different backgrounds.

The attempt at redefining the policy of the past within the EU itself clearly exemplifies how critical reconsideration of new historical interpretation has been detected as a key ideological tool. Especially indicative is the case of the latest relevant resolution of the European Parliament. Namely, on September 19, 2019, the Parliament adopted the Resolution *Europe must remember its past to build its future* by 535 voices in favor, 66 against, 52 abstentions. The Resolution calls for the establishment of a “common culture of remembrance” of the victims of Stalinism and Nazism as a way of “fostering Europeans’

resilience to modern threats to democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law.” And so, in the calendar of European commemorations and celebrations May 25 was established as International Day of Heroes of the Fight against Totalitarianism. That was yet another in a row of resolutions, public hearings and declarations equalizing “two totalitarianisms” – fascism and communism.¹

However, a part of European public opinion strongly criticized and vehemently renounced the said Resolution. Having launched an initiative for its annulment, organization *Transform Europe* declared that was not in the province of an institutional or political organism to assert a specific reconstruction of history by majority vote. “A use of history that wishes to impose a revisionist vision of principal events of the last century to turn them into weapons in the current political battles should have no place in a true democracy,” said the organization.

In its open letter the organization called the Resolution an attempt at erasing historical facts and equating the criminal Nazi regime and socialist and communist ideals. Though empirically unfounded, the Resolution was meant to

1 On January 25, 2006 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted the Resolution 1481 condemning the crimes committed by communist regimes. This was followed by public hearings on the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes (at the time of Slovakian presidency, in 2008), the Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism /2008/, and the Vilnius Declaration in 2009 that was adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council for European Security and Cooperation. On the grounds of these documents, August 23 was proclaimed the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism. And then, in February 2010 the Declaration on Crimes of Communism was adopted, and establishment of an international tribunal for crimes of communist regimes initiated.

undermine every opposition coming from the left of the political spectrum, argued signatories. To illustrate dramatic and potentially fatal consequences of such practice and the European Parliament's motion, they said that this was how "a shared memory" "forgets Altiero Spinelli, Italian communist and political prisoner between 1927 and 1943, and co-author of the Manifesto of Ventotene, who is widely known as one of the founding fathers of the European integration and therefore rightly became name giver to one of the buildings of the European Parliament."

The International Federation of Resistance Fighters – Association of anti-Fascists also strongly condemned the Resolution calling it "narrow-minded, decretal and instrumentalized."

Cases of revisionism on the territory of Western Balkans are also to be considered in the context of such developments in its neighborhood; however, it is also important to stress out that the autochthony of their emergence and development was specifically preconditioned by the heavy legacy of Yugoslavia's disintegration and the 1990s wars. Placing them in a wider international context enables a deeper insight into the limits of failures/successes of the struggle against revisionism on ex-Yugoslav territory, but barely provides a complete explanation.

SERBIA: ATTEMPTED NATIONALIZATION OF THE ANTI-FASCIST STRUGGLE

In the public sphere of Serbia and Belgrade a changed picture of the past has been systematically, for decades, erasing the legacy of socialism and Yugoslavia. Instead of being used as a guarantee of the region's new economic progress and a frame of a shared cultural sphere, the past has been turned into a repository of conflicting argumentation. The ways in which numerous social, cultural, historiographic and other

phenomena of the past have been interpreted are just staging conflicts and tensions.

Nationalization of historical narratives in the Yugoslav era was a smoke screen behind which political tensions and conflicts were instigated. Following on Yugoslavia's disintegration, the same method of interpretation of historical events made it possible for new political and economic leaders to "launder their biographies" and legitimize their positions at the time of the 1990s wars. Their platform rests on utter denial of all the forces that have twice created Yugoslavia, and affirmation of all the participants in the process of its disintegration and destruction.

All this is probably best exemplified by changed topographies of towns and nationalized geographic names as evident in national symbols, monuments and calendar of holidays and commemorations, or witnessed in renamed streets and squares, museum exhibits, etc.

The public sphere, defined after the fall of the Berlin Wall as a forum open to dialogue, has been turned into a boxing ring. Heroes and martyrs of the Yugoslav era have been knocked down and expelled from the public sphere – and so they have been erased from collective memory. In the newly emerged states, the main factor of one's exclusion was his or her membership of the communist movement, and ethnic origin. Though originally open to people's communication the public sphere (both in the real-world and in the virtual world of the internet) became a venue for aggressive maximalists and their claims for territorial redrawing.

In today's Serbia monuments are especially vital elements of the idea about new alliances. For years and years, they have been indicating a growing gap between the society and European integrations, and the society's gradual, but certain orientation towards Russia and the Euro-Asian Union. Long before the actual

standstill on the way towards European integrations, monuments had been clearly hinting at an outcome as such. To start with, in 2003 a monument to St. Sava, a donation from Russian sculptor and academician Vyacheslav Klikov, was erected in Belgrade. Six years later, Belgrade got a monument to Pushkin, a gift from the Alliance of Russian Writers. What ensued in 2011 was reconstruction of Belgrade's Tasmajdan park with a monument to Heydar Aliyev in its midst, and a monument to Azerbaijani composer Izeyir Hajibeyov in Novi Sad. At the ceremony marking the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War One (2014) a monument to Russian Emperor Nikolai II, a gift to Serbia from the Russian state, was installed in Belgrade's main downtown street; two years later, a monument to Jameel Jambayev, Soviet poet of Kazakh origin, was erected in New Belgrade. Erected at the time of this series monuments to Cyril and Methodius (2006), Gavrilo Princip (2014), Borislav Pekic (2016) and national hero (of the 1990s wars) Milan Tepic got an obvious ideological tint.

The practice confirmed Reinhart Koselleck's well-known conclusion about the space of experience that has been completely redefined in accordance with the horizon of expectation. In this context, museums, and not necessarily just history museums, figure as most important determinants. The past depicted in museums in an idealized, trivial or criminal manner is a constitutive element of the new "regime of historicism" (*Franso Hartog*). Policies of today's Europe's memory rest, inter alia, on historical narratives shaped by two types of museological institutions: museums of Holocaust (and/or

museums of the WWII) and museums of socialism. Serbia still has no so defined museological institutions, although thematic exhibitions or parts of permanent museological exhibits are touching on numerous narratives about Second World War and socialist Yugoslavia. The crux of their revisionism is equalization of "two resistance movements" or attempts at nationalizing the anti-fascist struggle. The need to have the large platform that unified different ethnic groups in the WWII – the platform of the partisan movement – delegitimized and criminalized derives from the main objective – to erase the memory of the experience of a "life together" in Yugoslavia. And so are deep incisions in the public sphere changing even personal memories that are still alive. New social frames that are being created (*Maurice Halbwachs*) are making it possible to amend even personal memories. Official policy for history rests on interpretations that are blotting out the memories of internationalism of the ideology of socialism and authentic Yugoslav experience.

So depicted past, based on revaluation of Second World War and Yugoslav experience, which relativizes the 1990s wars, cannot but generate conflicts between countries of the region, and deepen the gaps between their respective societies. At the same time, those very interpretations are faced with strong criticism and opponents who are gradually articulating new value systems, diametrically opposite to the said totalitarian presentation of the past.

Olga Manojlović Pintar

HISTORY TEXTBOOKS AS AN INTRODUCTION TO ANOTHER WAR

Stojan Cerović, late journalist for the *Vreme* weekly, wrote, long ago, that our past was more uncertain than our future. And he was as right as one could be. Over 30 years only, since the fall of the Berlin Wall till the beginning of Yugoslavia's disintegration, our past has been "changed" several times. In other words, dramatic political developments we have gone through influenced changes in values, paradigms, historical role models, heroes to glorify or anti-heroes to despise.

Studies of the culture of memory showed that there are many memory agents, message carriers influencing the way in which we shall be remembering some events. Such message carriers of collective memory range from names given to streets to commemorations and the media. The range also includes systems of education or, to put it more precisely, textbooks. Though many hold textbooks irrelevant as memory sources, given that students are generally bad in history, textbooks do figure as major documents. First and foremost, they are the only documents bearing "official seals." Namely, contents of textbooks have to be approved by the Ministry of Education, and once approved they are seen as "verified" and "competent" interpretations of the past, the way our history should be stored in our minds. The said "official seal" invests the power of official memory in history textbooks, the memory that equals a decretal national truth.

IN VIVO EXPERIMENTS

The fact that in Croatia history textbooks were amended in 1992, in Serbia in 1993 and in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1994 testifies of the paragraph above. One only needs to recall what it was that was going on in those countries at the times – wars, thousands of refugees and an almost paralyzed life – and the way things

were in Serbia under sanctions and plagued by hyperinflation, to understand the importance of "amending the past" and that even in hard times as such governments would stop at nothing to find a profitable use for the past. All it took was to place the present time against a suitable historical context, ban the narrative about brotherhood and unity that has dominated the preceding generation of textbooks, and create a conflict-generating model of the past, according to which enemies have been same for "the eternity," roles have never changed and the past seen as the only possible outcome of such history.

Being a historian on the territory of ex-Yugoslavia has been an almost incredible experience over past decades, because history resembled some experimental science in which everything is being tested *in vivo*. The first, above-mentioned amendment was after a radical change in the relationship between Serbs and Croats, starting from "the seventh century" or the first written documents about South Slovenes and their past. The change was meant to prove that conflict was the only possible relationship between the two nations, and thus justify the war going on at the time.

The second amendment was made in Serbia following on political changes in 2000; that was when the attitude towards Second World War was completely changed, partisans turned into collaborators and war criminals, and Chetniks became those who were saving people's lives, "beating up some" from time to time. With roles so changed, it was in the educational system that the dangerous "fascism vs. anti-fascism" game was in full swing.

Similar, threatening interpretations are also to be found in textbooks in all the countries emerging from Yugoslavia, especially in the lessons

about socialist Yugoslavia and the 1990s wars. The main objective was to present “one’s side” as the biggest victim of all neighboring nations, as the people who invested the most in the life together and lost the most from it. Such self-victimization preludes sharpening of conflicts with all neighbors, but also creation of a paranoid picture of the past – itself the best possible foundation for some future conflicts. It can be said, therefore, that the 1990s wars on the Yugoslav territory have been psychologically

amended thanks to revisions of history starting from the early 1980s; and it can also be said that the Yugoslav war has been removed to the “memory plane,” while major battles are now being waged over marking certain events of the 1990s, and maintenance of regional tensions and preparations for possible future conflicts being the main purpose of such manipulation.

Dubravka Stojanović

CROATIAN AND SERBIAN REVISIONISM: THE PRINCIPLE OF COMMUNICATING VESSELS

There are scores of similarities, though crucial differences as well, between Croatian and Serbian revisionists.

Croatian revisionists and Ustashi-lovers perceive Serbs as some primordial, eternal enemies. This is how Serbs, it seems, perceive Albanians – or, Shiptars, as they like to call them – in the first place, then Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslims/Bosniaks in a way, and Croats as the third on the list.

Both concepts perceive Yugoslavia in a negative light, though they differ when it comes to causes and reasons why it is so. And here we could go on and on.

Revisionism emerged in Croatia in 1989-90 as a historiographic delay and sociopolitical anomaly. Since 1990, unlike in Western states, Croatia’s new regime, President Franjo Tuđman most of all, had tolerated and encouraged it, and partially integrated it into its political program.

Croatian revisionism is generally characterized by and founded on a fetishized state and fetishized state-building idea (the goal of which was,

inter alia, “unification of the homeland Croatia and the Croatia in exile,” the slogan whereby Franjo Tuđman enriched Croatia’s ‘new-language’). Everything that had played into the hands of Croatia’s independence throughout history is interpreted in the best possible light and uncritically emphasized, while all weak points or culpabilities are exculpated or at least minimized. Opposite historical tendencies are generally perceived negatively, and their weaknesses or blames uncritically overblown. These revisionist tendencies – when positively or negatively exaggerating – are not even refraining from sweeping facts under the carpet or distorting them, all of which sometimes results in overt fabrications and lies.

(Only naturally) the circles and the media that have tended toward such ideas – and are still tending – have not been using terms revisionism and revisionists, because of their negative connotations, but speaking about “state-builders,” “state-building” state of mind, etc. As a notion “state-building” is more comprehensive than revisionism and does not always and necessarily denote something bad; on the contrary, some of “state-building” projects such as Ljubo Boban’s book “Croatia’s Borders” were quite

logical and justified. In his capacity as the president of Croatia's State Commission for Borders, Boban was after proving that Croatia's AVNOJ borders were the borders of the newly established, independent Croatia – which was crucial to prove at the time, in the 1990s. Last but not least, Croatia's "state-building" can equal the namesake process known in international communication – ergo, "building of a state" that implies key liberal-democratic elements – division of power, civil rights and freedoms, etc. And yet, as of the early 1990s Croatia's "state-building" has been nothing but boiling down the role of the state to a mere authoritarian rule within borders under the state's control, the rule cleansed from all liberal-democratic values.

PROCESS OF FETISHIZING THE STATE

As so the study of the past – at least when it comes to revisionists – has boiled down to stories about Croatia's statehood, the struggle for Croatian interests and against all aspirations from the outside, etc. Over the past 30 years the discourse of the said centers of power has replaced the term "state-building" with the slogan "undisputable values," which mostly refers to Homeland War and then some other events that took place in the recent past.

A strong argument in favor of state fetishism and, generally, fetishism of this schools of thought, was a phrase had been using more and more as it had been more and more obvious that Yugoslavia was falling apart: "Croatian people has been longing for independence for 900 years," he used to say, obviously alluding to the events in 1102 when that independence was allegedly lost. It goes without saying that the said independence was not lost at the time. This was all about a myth advocates for the establishment of NDH in 1941, starting with Ante Pavelić have stretched to the utter limit.

Namely, all that happened in 1102 was that a ruler from one side – the Hungarian dynasty – came to throne in Croatia. Medieval feudalists were not representatives of their nations but of their class. Should enthronement of a foreign dynasty be seen as a loss of independence of any kingdom, many European national histories would have been non-existent; for instance, Normans from North France occupied England in 1066, while in the 16th century Habsburgs were ruling the opulent Spain! And speaking about Croatia, it had maintained, this way or another, its more or less limited statehood till 1918 – as testified by the safeguard of its Assembly with autonomous functions. Even should the thesis about independence lost in 1102 be true, that would not imply that the thesis about "the 900-century longing for an independent state" was true as well. Namely, in the nature of things, the idea about a nation-state could have not been born before the 19th century because it was only then that the establishment of the middle-class launched the process of national integration, and then nation-states in Europe as well. And even at that time, and from the early second half of the 19th century, it was only the Croatian Party of Rights had the establishment of a nation-state in its program, while all other parties were advocating an approach that was more realistic at that moment in time – they were calling for revision of the 1868 Treaty and the like. And, judging by electoral outcomes, these parties were articulating interests of a part of the electorate that is not to be ignored. Last but not least, at the turn of the 20th century a part of the Rightists was advocating reliance on Austria. Therefore, the thesis about "the centuries-long longing of the Croatian people" should be taken with a pinch of salt. Be it as it may be, from the perspective of history the establishment of an independent state in 1991 is neither a more nor less important juncture.

Against such backdrop the Ustashi Independent State of Croatia (NDH) suddenly emerges in a relatively positive light, despite its Nazi-fascist nature, undivided political and war alliance with this historical Evil, genocide and other crimes it has committed (under the pretext that it was not only “a fascist creation but also an expression of the centennial longing of the Croatian people for an independent state”). At the same time, weak points and blames of both Yugoslav states, and especially the crimes committed in their names, are being generalized to such an extent that the rigid nationalistic policy can use them as arguments and, if possible, as justification for Ustashi’s crimes or at least for rendering those crimes relative.

MAIN CAUSES OF REVISIONISM

Causes of Croatian revisionism are manifold and can be classified in three basic categories.

First, over 45 years of socialist Yugoslavia the phenomenon of the Ustashi movement and NDH have been rarely analyzed with sober minds; it has mostly been a priori gauged, often even inflated and based on the tedious propaganda phraseology. At the same time, partisan and communist wartime and post-war crimes have been strictly embargoed. When democratization of political and social life in the late 1980s made it possible, the other extreme exploded. Raising the curtains on partisan and communist crimes became media sensations and were used as propaganda tools for stirring up xenophobia and political animosity, while Ustashi crimes were hushed up under a smoke screen of relativism, justifications and a vow of silence.

Second, authors engaged in historiographic revisionism in Croatia are usually not motivated by the scholarly research of the recent past but by specific political goals. It can be said at least that they are approaching their task with political

bias and on the platform of the ruling policy of the 1990s and from 2015 till this very day. As a rule, they are politically oriented towards right-wing or extreme right-wing, one of main traits of which is that they would never properly face up the crimes committed by the Ustashi regime in the NDH era. In the early 1990s the influence of a part of Croatian political emigres who had never given up the Ustashi ideology was very strong. A party that promptly proclaimed “reconciliation of Ustashi and partisans” as one of the pillars of its political program came to power at the time. This was meant to bridge the gaps in Croatia’s national corps and in its society in general. However, in order to attain this goal, the odium for a devoted Nazi-fascist ally and perpetrator of mass war crimes and genocide had to be stripped of the Ustashi movement. The idea was to invest at least some legitimacy into the Ustashi movement so that it could participate in development of the Croatian society against the backdrop of Europe’s predominant liberal democracy. As it turned out, this impossible without a radical historiographic revisionism and its accompanying denials or fabrications of facts.

As early as in the autumn of 1993 six intellectuals warned in an open letter to the head of the state that from the very start the things could not function the way he had planned. “In the name of an alleged national reconciliation you have allowed the invasion of Ustashi symbols, songs, renaming, distortions of history, and chauvinist statements and actions, all of which are changing the country’s constitutionally prescribed democratic identity. Therefore, your occasional anti-fascist statements resemble a poor screen and insufficiently soothe many fatal qualms about the country’s future fascist course.”

Namely, NDH had been far from what it allegedly was to stand for under the name given to it and from what Franjo Tuđman had planned to present it. Namely, it was not independent, simply because it was a Nazi-fascist protectorate.

German Nazis and Italian fascists had a free hand in their occupation zones on its territory. Besides, neither was it a state since a state, among other things, guarantees law and order to its citizens, while many sources testify of the regime's deliberate support to the state of anarchy. Last but not least, neither was it a Croatian state, since what Croatian state could it be without the Croatian Seashore and Dalmatia, Međimurje and Baranja, but only with some "ancient" Croatian towns such as Foča and Čajnič? And in which the biggest seashore towns are Senj, Trogir and Makarska, and Dubrovnik far in the south. All in all, the establishment of NDH was a fraud the Ustashi wanted to plant on Croats and all citizens of Croatia. From a legal point of view, but also from the viewpoint of reality, it would be better to replace the term "in the NDH era" with "at the time of occupation."

Besides, as soon as NDH was established the Ustashi leadership was doing its best to create the atmosphere of triumphalism. Itself exhilarated with its sudden success it was spreading

totally unrealistic optimism, claiming that the newly established state would immediately start progressing in every possible way once it had ridden itself of Belgrade's regime and become a part of "the new order" helmed by Reich. However, in almost no time disappointment replaced the affinity a part of the Croatian public opinion has felt for NDH: already by the summer of 1941 catastrophic results of Ustashi policy for economy, politics and military were laid bare.

Third, Croatian historiographic revisionism was partially a reaction to Serbia's swelled nationalism and historiographic revisionism in the 1980s. The beginnings of such tendencies had been visible in Serbia for already twenty years before in the books by writer and later on politician Dobrica Ćosić. "In today's world the Serbian nation is probably best known by its sacrifices and suffering for freedom, the ideological sum and substance of Serbian collective spirituality and virtue."

Ivo Goldstein

REVISIONISM AS A FOUNDATION OF NATIONALISTIC IDEOLOGY

Anti-fascism is not and cannot be a predominant value in the societies of nationalistic ideology as their main pillar of legitimacy. In Serbia, for as long as a quarter of a century, ever since destruction of second Yugoslavia that was based on consensual anti-fascism, anti-fascist legacy has been marginalized and banalized. More than twenty generations have been raised in the society in which anti-fascist values have not been predominant but replaced by the ideas characteristic of nationalism, xenophobia, neo-fascism and rehabilitation of WWII quislings, the ideas that had inspired violence, war, crimes, plunder, and annihilated social solidarity and human empathy. Denial and discredit of anti-fascism on the one hand, and glorification of nationalistic collaborationists on the other are

not the only, though important reasons why our society has found itself on the brink of historical abyss. One's own anti-fascist movement hushed up and defamed, monuments to the People's Liberation Struggle systematically neglected or turned to ashes, scores of renamed streets and squares (over 900 toponyms have been renamed in Belgrade only), abolished holidays, etc., do not testify of the past but of the present, testify of the events a society intends to remember out of its rich and complex history, depending on value orientation it would like to cherish; and let alone the devastating fact that Serbia is the only state in the post-Yugoslav region that marks not a single event of its struggle against fascism.

REAFFIRMATION OF THE DEFEATED QUISLING MOVEMENT

It was in the late 1980s, in parallel with the rise of nationalism and the beginnings of historiographic fabrications and rehabilitation of the Chetnik, collaborationism movement, that a planned and systematic annihilation of partisan legacy started in Serbia. Milošević's Serbia could have not started the war it was preparing itself for with the burden of supranational, anti-fascist and left-wing traditions of the People's Liberation Movement based on could have not been ethnic equality and people's right to self-determination. Nationalistic opposition to Milošević was even more radical in its historiographic revisionism. Generated hatred, aggression and outbreak of a bloody war for the Greater Serbia could have been compatible only with reaffirmed values of the defeated quisling movement in WWII. By its goals (establishment of a big, ethnically clean state by ripping parts of other republics) and methods (war, crimes, ethnic cleansing) the armed conflict in the 1990s did not differ much from the war Chetniks had been trying to wage in the 1940s. This is why the issue of anti-fascism is not only a problem of the attitude towards WWII and Yugoslavia but also a question of the attitude towards the 1990s wars.

And yet, and probably more than the warring regime have the authorities in power after 2000 contributed to the said "cause." With the new regime in power started a tide of historiographic revisionism and rehabilitations of Draža Mihailović, Milan Nedić and many other collaborators, proclaimed guilty of collaboration and mass war crimes committed on the territory of Yugoslavia in WWII. Simultaneously, history textbooks were imposing politically motivated interpretations of WWII development on students; all this prepared the terrain for all the branches of government to start toiling for a thoroughly fabricated history of the World War

II, negating Serbia's anti-fascism and undermining scholarly attainments not only of Yugoslav but also of world historiographies. The legislative branch was passing revisionist laws that imposed a perverted picture of history on the public. The executive branch was forming special commissions for finding bodily remnants of (Draža) Mihailović and digging up evidence of partisans' allegedly criminal character. For its part, the judicial branch of the country synonymic for to lawlessness and legal insecurity, was wasting time and money proofs on proclaiming proven war criminals and WWII collaborationists not guilty, while generating most shameful explanations based on grotesque and lame lies and fabrications, and demonstrating awesome ignorance.

With their decisions protagonists of historiographic revisionism "write" history, a history of their own, while leaving written testimonies of their endeavor, their ideology and their intellectual and professional (dis)honesty to future generations. Cognition of history is a changeable category, but history itself cannot be. And even the said cognition or perception of history can be changed only by paying due respect for the methodology of a historian's trade based on facts and reliable sources. A return to historical sources should prove once again that neither judges nor, even less, politicians and journalists are those who write history, nor the authors are all those today's protagonists of the predominant and pervading nationalistic ideology eager to place, at all costs, its forefathers and role models, military and moral losers on the list of anti-fascists. History is written only with strong reliance on methodological rules and principles of the trade, and with respect for the trade's fundamental starting point – available and relevant historical sources.

Milivoj Bešlin

THE ERA OF DECADENCE

The tectonic wave of historiographic revisionism that along with rehabilitation of the Chetnik movement and its leader Draža Mihailović hit Serbia like a natural disaster is only a segment – though an important one – of the global revanchist crusade of the philosophy of state egoism against the idea of internationalism. The said crusade has been going on for several decades; and, as things stand now, it managed to place the once powerful idea of internationalism on the margin of social consciousness. The idea of internationalism reached its summit when its main protagonist, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, was at the peak of its strength, in 1960-80. Main issues of intellectual engagement of the time were the threat of a nuclear war, hunger and poverty in underdeveloped countries, debt slavery, emergence of a new international economic order, struggle against colonialism, climate changes and ruthless destruction of natural environment. Gorbachev's 'glasnost' was the peak of the idea of internationalism but also its swan song. 'Glasnost' was a desperate appeal against ephemeral and selfish particularistic interests, and for focusing social attention and action on interests of the humanity as a whole. Gorbachev himself placed the biggest possible sacrifice at the altar of 'glasnost' by saying that all this was not about the fate of socialism but of the fate of our planet and the life on it. The world is one and only, and all of us are travelling in the same boat – the Earth, and should not allow it to sink, he said. "Another Noah's Ark will be not."

The idea of internationalism was undermining the very foundations of local oligarchies that launched a counteroffensive in almost no time. A variety of isolationists, sovereigntists and defenders of allegedly threatened national dignity – from US and Brazil, through Britain and Hungary, to China and Russia – showed up under the guise of protection of national interests and

sovereignty. The same as here, in Serbia, they were messaging that they "would bow down before anyone," although no one has ever asked them to. In order to ensure legitimacy those self-proclaimed messiahs needed badly to destroy internationalism and ally themselves with some real or fabricated forefathers – or, when it comes to the countries that took part in the struggle against fascism, what they needed badly was a new interpretation of developments and actors of the WWII era. That's was how revisionism was born.

What is important to note is that revisionism is founded on a colossal lie that it was not the idea of internationalism that defeated fascism but ideas and movement of state and national egoism. Once you manage to imbue a social mindset with such a capital lie, then you get the entire system of the rule of state egoism based on a series of small and big lies. A flossy slogan of the promoters of state and national egoism perfectly fits into this context: allegedly, they are freedom fighters and struggle against all totalitarian regimes, that they are against fascism and communism alike. If you pose quite a simple question to those so-called freedom fighters – "are you an anti-fascist?" – no way you'll get a simple answer such as 'yes' but one always followed by 'yes, but we are also anti-communists.' And you had not even asked them whether or not they were anti-communists after all. Such levelling fascism with communism, and equalizing those who had liberated Auschwitz and the ones who had built it is a gross malfeasance of ethics, but also an ideological mimicry leader of the Farmers' Party Dragoljub Jovanović has so finely disclosed. As Olivera Milosavljević reminded us, he said that the one saying "neither fascism nor communism" actually supports fascism, "but is just not brave enough to admit it."

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Let's now go back to the beginning and the global-historical conflict between state egoism and internationalism. It is often claimed that the philosophy of state egoism is a realistic one, that it takes into consideration the real state of affairs in today's world and is founded on the principle of "national interests," the one the medieval philosophers had proclaimed a legitimate principle of political action and governance. By contrast with such claim, it is also argued that internationalism is an emotional and moral category with Utopian contents that are contrary to the actual state of affairs in the world and its economic-technical characteristics.

This is as wrong as it could possibly be. The philosophy of state egoism is escapism, head in the sand and negligence of dramatic challenges today's world is faced with. According to it, the threat of global nuclear war, dramatic climate changes and destruction of natural environment, the threats of regional conflicts or

rivalry between leading countries in the world would be best overcome when not discussed at all. Unfortunately, such infantile indifference, such contemporary conformism and nihilism are predominant. With its grim realism, internationalism that appeals for an all-inclusive endeavor and sacrifice of some short-lived benefits for the sake of the future, disembarked its supporters on lonely islands in the sea of the predominant short-sightedness. And those islands too, the same as the European Union, the same as Swedish girl Greta or the same as, here, in our region, Montenegro that is defending itself from revisionism and rehabilitation of the Chetnik movement, and against which Serbian nationalism is waging a totally hybrid war – and those islands are also under a strong offensive of state egoism – or, as in our case, of ethnic idiocy that marches under the banner of revisionism. Will they or not manage to counter this offensive is the question.

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